

REMARKS

Claims 1-24, 27-30 and 32-36 are pending in this application, with claims 6, 8-10, 16, 18, 20 and 35 being currently withdrawn by the Examiner. The withdrawn dependent claims should be rejoined and allowed when their corresponding independent claims is allowed. See MPEP 821.04. By this Amendment, non-elected claims 25, 26, 31 and 37 are canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Applicant reserves the right to pursue the subject matter of claims 25, 26, 31 and 37 in a divisional application.

Applicant appreciates the Office Action's indication that claims 15, 17, 19, 21 and 34 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, including all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The Office Action (1) rejects claims 1, 2, 5, 7, 24, 27, 30, 32 and 36 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over JP 2003-341033 A to Kobayashi in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0196300 A1 to Takahashi et al. (hereinafter "Takahashi"); (2) rejects claim 3 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Kobayashi in view of Takahashi, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,578,944 to Kamei et al. (hereinafter "Kamei"); (3) rejects claims 4, 12, 28 and 33 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Kobayashi in view of Takahashi, and further in view of JP 2000-141627 A to Katayama; (4) rejects claim 11 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Kobayashi in view of Takahashi, and further in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0145640 A1 to Anderson et al. (hereinafter "Anderson"); (5) rejects claim 13 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Kobayashi in view of Takahashi, and further in view of Kamei and Katayama; (6) rejects claims 14 and 29 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Kobayashi in view of Takahashi, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,742,301 to Ikeda; (7) rejects claim 22 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Kobayashi in view of Takahashi, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,853,948 to Jewell; and (8) rejects claim 23 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over

Kobayashi in view of Takahashi, and further in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0160852 A1 to Pickup. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

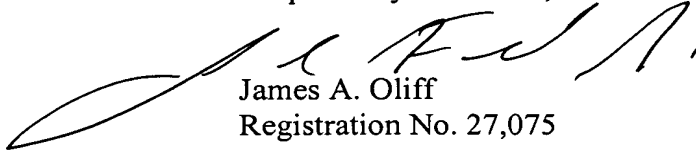
Kobayashi fails to qualify as prior art against this application because the December 3, 2003 publication date of Kobayashi is after the filing date of Applicant's earlier foreign priority application. The instant application claims priority to JP 2003-067063, which was filed March 12, 2003. An accurate English translation of JP 2003-067063 is attached. Because JP 2003-067063 fully supports the claims, Kobayashi does not qualify as prior art. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

In addition, Applicant respectfully request rejoinder of and allowance of withdrawn claims 6, 8-10, 16, 18, 20 and 35, in view of the patentability of independent claims 1 and 32, from which these claims respectively depend.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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JAO:LXF/lmf

Attachment:

Translation of Japanese Application No. 2003-067063

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